

FIA fiscal year 2001 budget proposed

**New FIA budget proposal increases state funds nearly 11 percent
Inflationary increases added for many programs**

LANSING—State Budget Director Mary Lannoye presented Gov. John Engler's fiscal year 2001 state budget recommendation to a joint session of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees Jan. 27. The budget includes a proposed Family Independence Agency budget totaling \$3.5 billion in state and federal funds for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, 2000.

Of the proposed budget, \$1.2 billion is in state general and restricted funds, a near 11 percent increase over the current year. The budget includes proposed increases in most areas of FIA operations next

year and to expand Project Zero statewide.

"I am proud to report that Michigan is fiscally strong and stands prepared for the challenges of the 21st century," said Engler. "My budget recommendation continues a tradition of controlling spending while investing in efforts to improve education, strengthen families and create jobs."

The 2001 budget recommendation totals \$36.2 billion, which includes \$9.6 billion in general fund spending as well as \$10.1 billion for the School Aid Fund. The total

spending increase is \$1.3 billion or 3.7 percent. The fiscal year 2001 general fund revenues were estimated at \$9.74 billion in the Consensus Revenue Estimating Conference. Highlights of the fiscal year 2001 FIA budget include services to support and increase independence, said Lannoye.

"Michigan's welfare reform efforts continue to produce extraordinary results," she said. "A reduction of nearly 15,000 welfare cases is expected between fiscal year 2000 and 2001, continuing a downward trend since the early 1990s. In fact, cash assistance caseloads have declined 72 percent since 1992, when Michigan's welfare reform efforts began. However, some families are still unable to secure employment.

"Therefore, the budget proposes several initiatives to foster the transition to independence. The budget includes \$50 million to finance a Family Opportunity Project." The one-time project will consist of the following initiatives:

■ **The Family Opportunity Project**, a summer family enrichment program. This intensive, family-centered initiative will assist Family Independence Program families without employment. The adults in the family will be assessed to determine barriers to employment and a range of services will be provided to make them more work-ready, including mentor services, life skills training, parenting education, volunteer

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FIA Icon for March 2000

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To FIA Icon

Just wanted to compliment this edition (December 1999) of the FIA Icon. I think you really did an outstanding job highlighting so many of the great things happening in FIA. I plan to use some of these ideas in the Delta-Menominee operation. Congratulations and best regards.

Steve Lieburn, Director
Delta-Menominee County Family Independence Agency
Escanaba-Menominee

FIA people

Lynne Croxford, a former Ingham County FIA director and member of the editorial board of this newsletter, died unexpectedly at her home Feb. 23. In recent years, she served as director of FIA systems internal control and security and, before that, as a special assistant to the FIA chief information officer. Ms. Croxford, who was an East Lansing resident, had been a member of the FIA Icon editorial board since 1997. She was 52.



Lynne Croxford

FIA director **Douglas E. Howard** announced the appointment of **Renee Hayward** as permanent director of Jackson County Family Independence Agency. Hayward, a former employee of Michigan Department of Mental Health, has held various Wayne County administrative posts. Most recently she was district manager for the North Central Child and Family Services District. "We are very pleased to announce this assignment," said Howard Jan. 20. "She is a high caliber administrator."

On Jan. 24 **Debi Cain** became the new executive director to the Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board. Cain has 21 years' experience in the domestic violence field, said FIA Child and Family Services Administration director **Jim Beougher** when he announced her appointment Jan. 12. "Most recently Debi has been director of the Violence Against Women Training Institute," said Beougher. "Thanks to **Cheryl Sibilsky** for her excellent leadership as the acting executive director the past two years."

Joyce Bosscher, a field worker with the Kent County Family Independence Agency, continues to receive kudos for her work with FIA customers employed at Grand Rapids' Cascade Engineering, an award-winning welfare-to-work employer. "Joyce is addressing problems daily which go beyond the issues of transportation and child care...related to homelessness, domestic violence and family relationships," said Ronald Jimmerson Sr., human resources manager for Cascade Engineering, on Jan. 11. "We are beginning to determine that our attendance problems are not just related to transportation. Joyce has been well received by our staff and employees. She is very well-respected for the work she does."

After success as manager at the Wayne County FIA Warren-Conner district office, **Wanda Bailey** was promoted to the position of Zone VII manager, effective Feb. 7. "I am pleased to announce the appointment of Wanda Bailey," said **Clarence Willis Jr.**, Wayne County deputy director. "Ms. Bailey has been employed with the FIA nearly 28 years. She brings to the position significant experience and knowledge."



FIA Icon

*a publication of Michigan's
Family Independence Agency*

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From the Director

By Douglas E. Howard

Director, Family Independence Agency

The FIA and its “image” report

In spring 1999 the Family Independence Agency entered into contract with Rossman Martin Associates of Lansing to help us understand how customers, employees and the public perceive our agency. The impetus for this project was to determine how we could better meet the needs of families requiring FIA services. We have very high expectations of participation for our customers. If the way in which they're treated can affect their ability to meet these expectations, we must assure we are as supportive as possible. I believed an independent third party would make respondents more comfortable. The firm solicited input from three groups – approximately 100 current recipients, 25 employees and 500 income-eligible families who may or may not receive services from FIA.

On October 25, 1999 Rossman Martin issued a report called “Family Independence Agency Image Project, Research Results, Conclusions, Analysis & Recommendations.” This document represents highlights from the Rossman Martin report and begins discussion of the agency's plan to address the findings.

Among major findings the report indicated current and former customers believe:

- Information on FIA programs and services is neither widely available in communities nor routinely offered by FIA workers.
- Their overall experience with FIA depends almost entirely on whether they had a “good” or “bad” caseworker.
- Too many FIA workers treat them badly, even mean.
- Policies require extensive personal information and paperwork, which exacerbates their feelings of embarrassment.

Focus groups with employees showed they think:

- Morale and workload issues can affect the way FIA staff persons treat customers.
- The public image of FIA is poor and that news media play a role in perpetuating this image.
- Employees often disagree with administrative policy for media responses and would like the option of localized response, especially in stories involving case confidentiality.
- There is no formal distribution plan for agency materials.

The survey of income eligible families found that:

- While they were aware of FIA services, less than half were aware that they might be eligible to receive FIA help.
- They would be more likely to use FIA services if services were better, faster and delivered in a friendlier manner.
- These groups, more than current customers, more often ranked the FIA as doing a “good” job.

The Rossman Martin report said: “First, FIA is a government agency. As such, we would expect any external audience to offer lukewarm performance assessments. People dislike government. Second, clients who visit the agency are often in desperate and needy circumstances. This and the stigma of being a welfare recipient cause angst for clients. These factors likely influence client perceptions. Third, operationally and politically, FIA is in a difficult position, pulled and tugged in different ideological and functional directions: the social safety net for the poor and public expectations to be a hand up, not a hand out.”

While some results may be construed as negative, I believe they serve as a baseline upon which we can begin a program to improve our services to customers. I believe the results of this report, our preliminary proposal in response to issues from the report, and the caveats of Rossman and Martin are critical as we proceed to use this information to improve services. Our core mission, to help strengthen individuals and families so they can become self-sufficient, remains unchanged. I believe a continued and renewed focus on dignity and respect will help us better meet that mission.

I also want to make clear that in the year that I have been with this agency, I have found that the vast majority of our staff are deeply committed to customer focused service delivery. There is nothing in the report that directly refutes that judgment. I am extremely proud of the staff of this agency and I will put them up against any other human services staff in the country. This has been reinforced time and time again in public forums, local office visits and meetings at juvenile justice facilities and commissions. I also want to make it clear that my current focus is on better services to those who already come to us—not recruitment for new customers. We have a challenge ahead of us, but one that we can meet and overcome together.

Genesee County honors state's 74th Achiever

Flint mom of four is first to be honored in the new century

By Linda Sue Best, Departmental Trainee

Genesee County Family Independence Agency

Telephone (810) 760-2740

FLINT—Family Independence Agency director Douglas E. Howard was in Genesee County Jan. 20 to present the agency's statewide Achiever of the Month Award to Crystal McClain. Crystal is a former Family Independence Program recipient who has made great progress toward self-sufficiency for her family.

The awards luncheon was held at the Ramada Plaza Hotel in downtown Flint. Attendees included county staff, Crystal's family and friends and Work First partners. FIA staff attended including Outstate Operations director Jim Nye and Zone 4 manager Janet Burch.

During the event, in addition to the Achiever Award certificate, Howard presented McClain with a plaque from state Sen. Robert Emerson and state Rep. Jack Minore, both from Flint, expressing their congratulations to her.

In her introduction of director Howard, Denise Chambers, director of Genesee County Family Independence Agency, said she was pleased to have the first year 2000 achiever of the Month selected from Genesee County. She acknowledged Genesee County's efforts as a Project Zero pilot site in moving our FIA customers toward self-sufficiency.



Crystal McClain

About Crystal McClain

Crystal McClain is a mother of three sons—Johnathan, age 11, Demetrius, age 8, Kenyal, age 7—and daughter Chasmir, age 9. McClain first came to the Genesee County FIA for assistance in June 1989 as a teenager pregnant with her first child. For a number of years Crystal relied on FIA programs, food stamps, Medicaid and child day care to make ends meet. Along the way she had a variety of jobs including working as a sales clerk at Kmart and Wal-mart and as a counter person at Arby's.

Although she has managed to maintain consistent employment, Crystal knew her lack of a high school diploma was a barrier to better

employment. Crystal went back to school and in 1998 received her GED from Mott Adult Education. While working at Medilodge Care Facility, a nursing assistant training program became available. Crystal signed up, attended classes and earned her certification. Today, Crystal works full-time at HIS of Clarkston/The Greenery as a nursing assistant.

Crystal was nominated for the achiever program by her case-worker, Cheryl Buckley. Buckley nominated Crystal because she is a "truly remarkable person" who has overcome many challenges to accomplish her goals. Buckley is grateful for the Achiever program because it allows the opportunity to share success stories like Crystal's.

"Through all the adversity, Crystal has maintained a positive attitude," said Buckley. "She has continued to move forward, challenging herself further."

Mom, student, worker, volunteer

In addition to her employment and school, Crystal currently volunteers at the Center Academy, where her children attend school. She realizes the importance of giving back to the community and, in that spirit, accepted director Howard's invitation to become a participant in the Client Advisory Committee, a group of



To Strengthen Michigan Families

Achiever of the Month

former FIA customers that advises the director. Buckley said Crystal would continue to succeed and share her success as a role model for her children and Family Independence Agency customers.

Being chosen as the Achiever of the Month has further motivated Crystal to continue her education.

Her case-worker announced—to resounding applause at the awards ceremony—that Crystal



Michael Fernandes

has been accepted as a student at Mott Community College for spring 2000 classes. Although she recognizes that going to school, working and being a full-time mom will not be easy, Crystal can do it because she has done it before!

Crystal has had other barriers besides education to overcome. She does not have a driver's license, so getting to work or going on job interviews has been a challenge. Fortunately, Crystal's sister has been very supportive, providing transportation and day care services for Crystal's children when necessary. Crystal has set a goal of obtaining her driver's license and, as her case-worker said, it won't take her long to accomplish that feat.

No license, ADHD...no problem

Crystal's Work First provider, Human Investment and Development, assisted in her transition by supplying travel mileage reimburse-

ment and clothing vouchers for work uniforms. Michael Fernandes, who is CEO of Human Investment and Development, acknowledged that Crystal didn't spend much time in their agency.

"Crystal was the ideal participant, very self-motivated to make a better life for herself and her family," he said in remarks at the ceremony. "Crystal took what opportunities were given to her and made the most of them."

Crystal's oldest son, Johnathan, was diagnosed with Attention Deficient Hyperactivity Disorder. Because of that, his behavior has made it difficult for Crystal to find day care providers. It has also led to increased transportation problems. On many occasions Crystal has had to leave her job at a moment's notice to deal with emergencies.

Crystal sought resources on her own to help her cope. She attended a stress management class as well as a course on having a child with ADHD. In addition, Crystal's caseworker encouraged her to apply for SSI for Johnathan, which was approved in September of last year.

Personal delight

Crystal was delighted to receive the achiever award. She told the crowd of approximately 150 that her mother would have been very proud of her. Crystal expressed her gratitude to her worker, Ms. Buckley, for her support and encouragement and acknowledged.

"I have not planted my feet

on the mark yet, but I am continuing to work toward the goals I've set for my life," she said.

Following the emotional ceremony, Genesee County director Chambers expressed what was on most people's minds.

"So often we touch the lives of our clients without having the benefit of seeing a positive end result," said Chambers. "This ceremony brought tears to so many eyes today because we were able to see the fruition of our mission."

Crystal's cash assistance case closed on October 13, 1998 due to excess earnings. She is the 74th person to receive the Achiever award.



Crystal and Cheryl Buckley

■ For more information on the Achiever of the Month program contact Jan Berry at (517) 373-7394. A complete listing of monthly Achievers is available on the FIA Internet website at www.mfia.state.mi.us



Governor kicks off 2000 Census count in Michigan

LANSING—To ensure Michigan receives its share of federal funding and congressional representation, Gov. Engler kicked off a new Census promotional campaign Dec. 8.

“How America Knows What Michigan Needs” is a statewide campaign highlighting the importance of obtaining the most complete Census 2000 count possible.

“We are committed to count every Michigan resident,” said Engler, who joined federal and state Census officials Feb. 9 to officially kick off the 2000 Census, which will be conducted on April 1.

“All state agencies will be

■ Working with “hard to count” populations such as those on welfare, state agencies will help people fill out and return their Census forms. The

state is also helping the Census Bureau set up Questionnaire Assistance Centers. At a local level, Census information is used:

continues on next page

April 1 is Census Day

involved in this effort through communications with their employees and the customers they serve,” said Engler. “I expect support from every member of the Legislature, as they understand the importance of securing the best count possible and the impact it has on (their) districts.”

Census information impacts Michigan residents in many ways. The federal government uses it to determine the amount of funding it will provide for everything from education to transportation to health care. To augment the U.S. Census Bureau’s efforts, the state is dedicating staff, time and resources to Census 2000, including:

■ Helping the U. S. Census Bureau recruit 74,000 job applicants in Michigan. The state’s Work First programs are recruiting candidates and state retirees will also be solicited for these jobs.

■ Promoting Census 2000 through every state agency and department, by taking advantage of daily contacts with customers.

Census 2000 Facts

The outcome of Census 2000 potentially affects many public services and areas of life including those listed here:

■ Title I education funding. The state of Michigan has received approximately \$800 per Title I child per year for the last 10 years – based on 1990 Census figures – impacting every school district across the state. Funding levels may vary by district due to “hold harmless” and other legislative provisions.

■ Community Development Block Grant Program. This year Michigan received nearly \$50 million to support the beautification and revitalization of urban communities from the federal government. Grants were based on income and population characteristics obtained through the census.

■ Support for our public libraries. Our public libraries receive substantial support from the federal government and foundations based on census data. In 1999 Michigan received \$4.5 million in federal funding through a formula based in part on population.

■ Support for Michigan’s neediest citizens. This year, Michigan received a Social Services Block Grant totaling approximately \$69 million to promote self-supportive families and individuals; and prevent neglect, abuse and exploitation of children and adults unable to protect their own interests. Further, the state received \$10 million in federal funds for Child Welfare Services to enable children to remain in their homes, or when that is impossible, to provide alternate permanent homes through foster care and adoption.

■ Assistance for our senior citizens. Data gathered from Census 2000 will help Michigan secure funds to support health services for our senior population. This year Michigan received more than \$33 million to cover elder abuse prevention and long-term care and nutritional programs.

■ Road funding. Michigan averages \$825 million annually in federal highway transportation road dollars and \$70 million in federal mass transit funds based in part on population totals.

■ Planning for the future. At a local level, Census information is used by planners to determine the number of highways, hospitals, health services and retirement homes and to predict future needs in housing, education, child care, medical care, transportation and employment.

■ Protecting against discrimination. The federal government uses Census information to track how many bank loans are being awarded in impoverished areas. This monitoring is done to prevent discrimination, a process known as “redlining” against low-income families and individuals seeking financial assistance.

■ Emergency management. Population characteristics are used as proof for federal reimbursement in a federally declared emergency.

FIA participation in the United States Census 2000

FIA customers in Wayne County being recruited for Census counting

Up to 5,000 temporary jobs available in southeastern Michigan

By Billie Jean Edwards

Wayne County Family Independence Agency

The Family Independence Agency is one of many state agencies participating with Census 2000 to ensure an accurate count in Michigan on Census Day, April 1. George Noonan is the FIA state liaison to Michigan state government efforts. Following are examples of FIA participation from Wayne County.

Volunteer services coordinators are serving as liaisons for the Wayne County FIA Census 2000 collaboration to recruit employees for the upcoming Census and educate customers and the community on the importance of being counted. Wayne County FIA is committed to this program as part of its commitment to strengthening families by involving communities.

Each volunteer services coordinator is assigned to work with a specific Wayne County Regional Census Center. Approximately 5,000 temporary Census positions are available countywide. The Census Bureau hopes to select applicants from a pool consisting of FIA customers, employees and the community. Volunteer services coordinators contacted Census Centers to discuss

how the FIA and Census Bureau could accomplish the goals of the collaboration. The Livonia Regional Census Center's area includes Redford and a portion of Romulus and Oakland County. A Census presentation was conducted at the Redford district office on Jan. 25. Customers will be tested at the Work First site. Oakland County contacts were provided for follow-up.

On Jan. 20, the Inkster district office hosted a meeting for Dearborn Regional Census Center administrators, FIA district managers and Project Zero coordinators. As a result of the meeting, the Inkster, Lincoln Park and Taylor districts will remain open late to allow Census recruiters to perform on-site testing for potential Census workers. Census recruiters will also conduct overviews and do testing at Work First sites.

Management staff from districts in Detroit North Regional Census Center arranged individual appointments with Census administrators to visit their offices and establish a plan of action. The Wayne County FIA Schoolcraft, Highland Park, Tireman, Fullerton-Jeffries, Glendale-

Trumbull, Grand River-Warren and Forrest-Ellery districts have agreed to on-site weekly testing.

The Detroit East Regional Census Center contacted FIA offices in their area by mail to arrange appointments to discuss on-site testing. On Jan. 26, the Hamtramck district office hosted a job fair at Catholic Social Services. The Census Bureau attended and provided employment information to FIA customers. Census recruiters will conduct on-site weekly testing at the Hamtramck district office Feb. 7 through March 3. On-site testing takes place every Tuesday at Medbury-Concord district office.

Representatives from the Detroit West Regional Census Center have met with the Wayne County FIA Schoolcraft, Magnolia, Greydale and Joy-Greenfield districts and arranged testing for customers and staff. Magnolia is sponsoring a job fair Feb. 16 that will include the Census Bureau. Census staff is working with customers at Work First sites.

■ For more information on the FIA and Census 2000 contact George Noonan, FIA Census state liaison, at (517) 335-7756.

Census 2000 kickoff in Michigan

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- To distribute money to counties and school districts to improve the education of children.
- By planners to determine the number of highways, hospitals, health services and retirement homes.
- To predict future needs in housing, education, child care, medical care, transportation and employment.
- To forecast the number of people eligible for Social Security and Medicare benefits.
- To determine whether financial institutions meet the credit needs of minorities in low- and moderate-income families.

The Census 2000 web page is a centralized resource for all individuals, interest groups, cities, townships, villages, and schools wishing to obtain more information on the census. Information about all of the state's efforts and where to go for assistance can be found on the state's new Census 2000 web page: www.state.mi.us/census2000

How, now, snow, wow...

Words seem simple until you lose your sight Blind wordsmith makes sense of the irony in her poetry

By Dee Robertson

Michigan Commission for the Blind, Lansing
Telephone (517) 373-2062

They look like they rhyme if
you can see these words, of course.
They don't all sound like they rhyme,
however, if you can hear them.

For poet Patricia Grindel, author
of "Patty's Poems", the simple matter
of rhyming words is just a minor

obstacle in her everyday life. Patty,
who is both legally blind and pro-
foundly deaf, writes poetry almost
every day of her life. Her poetry is
full of life, humor and her faith in God
and often details the frustrations she
faces with great dignity and laughter.

Patty started writing poetry
after the 1991 death of her beloved
husband, Mel, shortly before their 25th
wedding anniversary. With encour-
agement from family and friends, she
patiently typed a poem on her old
electric typewriter, though she could
not see the print because it was too
small for her limited vision.

She would then transfer the
page to a closed circuit television
(CCTV) that enlarges the print to a
size equivalent to a 26 font. There she
would check for typing errors, reread
the poem several times to make sure
it said what she wanted it to say, then
go back to the typewriter to re-type
the poem and correct any typographi-
cal mistakes. Then back to the CCTV
to read it again and check for more
mistakes, again and again, until the
type and poem were "perfect."

With assistance from the
Michigan Commission for the Blind
Deaf-Blind Unit, Patty now has a
computer on which to write her
poetry and the training to use it. The
computer, with a 17-inch monitor, is
set up with an automatic font size of
26 for easy reading when she turns it
on. She can now write, read, correct,
and print her lively poems in much
less time and with a great deal less
frustration.

Patty published her first book
of poetry in 1998 and is busily occu-



Patricia Grindel

pied with marketing this book,
inscribing each with a personal
note to the purchaser if requested,
and writing more poetry for her
second book. She graciously gives
credit for her success to the
support she has received from her
vocational rehabilitation counselor
in the Deaf-Blind Unit and to the
training she received while at the
Michigan Commission for the Blind
Training Center in Kalamazoo.

Patty has attended training
at the Kalamazoo center twice,
once several years ago for the
basic "skills of blindness" training
and again in 1998 for specialized
computer training to learn to use
her wonderful new tool. Having
been both visually and hearing
impaired due to encephalitis at age
five, Patty is fortunate to have had
a strong English language base
before her illness. This, coupled
with an excellent education in the
Clio school system and wonderful
support and encouragement from
her parents, enabled Patty to
pursue her two passions in life:

PUZZLES

By Patricia Grindel
April 1, 1996

There are so many different kinds of puzzles
Jigsaw, crossword and search for a word
But some of the most fascinating kinds
Are the ones my mind tries to absorb

Like why is that car just sitting over there?
I know whose car it is, but I can't see
So when I get a chance, I call and ask why?
It turns out they were just waving to me

Now, we're gathered in a meeting room
The speaker has white hair and a white robe
And, oh Lord, the wall is also white as snow.
I can hear him, but my eyes have to probe

My ears can't seem to figure the mystery
Of a mumble from a growling grumble
There seems to be too many tongue twisters
And it sure can make my mind stumble

Those people just standing there in the hall
Who are they, friend or foe, what do they want?
I just have to get a lot closer to see who
They aren't just shadows, they're my friends

I cannot figure out some hard core mysteries
Of why people go around with a scowl and frown
When the day is beautiful and things are OK
Why they drown in misery and let things go down

The world is full of different puzzles to solve
Maybe as many as different people on earth
But one thing for sure, happiness is within
And many things can be better with a smile

writing poetry and playing Scrabble.

Her husband Mel and later their three children became her focal point for many years, until Mel's death. Then her need to express her grief and sense of loss led her back to poetry. Patty's three children, Melinda, Brian, and Tammy, continue to be her pride and joy, along with their chosen mates and her grandchildren.

"Write about what you know" is a frequent comment in writing classes all over the United States for high school, colleges and professional writing seminars. Patty has taken this advice to heart as many of her poems contain the names and details of her friends, family, and acquaintances.

She often writes about the people in her life with positive insight and encouragement for small successes including her monthly poem, listing by name and date the birthdays for that month of all residents of her apartment complex. She has a strong belief that all people like to see their special events remembered in print, and this gift from her is truly from the heart.

Patty's infectious laugh is often present as she tells stories of her challenges and the mistakes she has made due to her legal blindness. The wonderful poem about a dinner of "barbecued" chicken—that was in actuality coated in blueberry syrup instead of barbecue sauce—and the

cooking spray she used to make pancakes (not seeing the label indicating its high garlic content)...not to mention the meatball that turned "magically" into a Brussels sprout in her mouth... These cause peals of laughter from Patty and her audience as she relates it or reads her other poems aloud.

Her frustrations with communication due to her profound deafness are many, but are dealt with in Patty's own businesslike, determined and humorous way. When her verbal requests for sign language interpreted masses at her beloved local parish (utilizing the special skills of an Interpreter knowledgeable about deaf-blindness) were not answered she took it to the top: a letter to Bishop Mengeling of the Diocese of Lansing.

When she felt isolated because so few people know sign language, she volunteered to teach sign language in the elementary school near her apartment. When she felt lonely and bored, she found a group to play her favorite game, Scrabble, every week, she arranged transportation and made sure the Scrabble board and tiles were large enough that she could read them easily to enjoy the game.

Patty's story is just one of the success stories in the records of Michigan Commission for the Blind, and she is an individual we are proud to salute.

■ To order Patty Grindel's book of poems, contact her by email at pattyspoems@juno.com

Brussels Sprouts Look Like Meatballs

By Patricia Grindel

December 19, 1999

Those have to be meatballs, so little and round
But no, they aren't, they're Brussels sprouts
Then that spray for the pancakes
Is garlic, not corn oil, my nose shouts

Barbecue sauce for chicken in the pot
Was nary that at all, it was blueberry syrup
Applesauce now isn't that real nice
It's chicken gravy, my mind's corrupt

Down on the floor I see a shiny dime
But bending to retrieve, it's silver paper
The addresses on my envelopes are lines
Until I use my magnificent enlarger

Stairs look like the floor, a hazard, you see
Ice can be confusing, it looks like water
And where, oh where, is the curb in the snow
All is so white and makes me falter

Hills can be alarming, indeed
If all looks level to the bewildered eyes
One person can look like another
Just a reminder, each has a shape and size

Trying to find something I've lost
Is like looking for a needle in a haystack
My coat is nowhere to be found
Well, gee, take a look on the coat rack

I laugh at myself with merriment and glee
To know it's confusing when things don't peter out
There's nothing like humor that can be found
In a meatball that's really a Brussels sprout

I bought a toothbrush that turned out to be kid's
How about bubble bath I didn't know was Barbie
The prices I can't see and spend too much
Items in stores are mysterious as ever they can be

There's dark confusion all around
If I'm looking for something that should be there
The corners are dark and things just blend
And all things look blurry until I get near

Some things I can see for sure are dark and light
I can see the power of love in you and me
God's beauty and wonder outside my window
For us all to enjoy with song and harmony

Peacemaking

An ancient concept of justice right for the new millennium

System uses victim healing, community involvement to resolve tribal legal issues

By Philip Memberto

Little River Band of Ottawa Indians

Telephone (888) 723-8288

■ This article was solicited by the FIA Office of Native American Affairs and was written by the peacemaking coordinator for the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians. The FIA Child and Family Services Administration works to enhance close working relationships with tribal partners in Michigan. FIA Indian outreach workers and the Indian Outreach Program are partners in achieving this goal. This article features an exciting program used in Michigan.

The Little River Band of Ottawa Indians started on a journey two years ago with volunteers from their community to revive and develop an old concept used in tribal communities throughout this country: peacemaking.

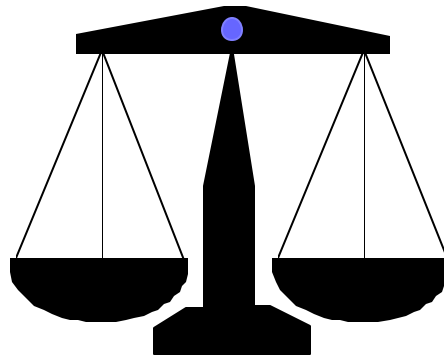
For the Anishnabek, or native people in the Great Lake basin, this concept of community justice was probably not known as peacemaking—the ways of justice had a different name and it was usually administered by the clan systems.

System used in numerous tribal communities

Peacemaking is not just happening, it has been going on actively in other parts of Indian country. The Pueblo and Navajo have kept their way of handling justice through traditional peacemaking ways along with the operation of a tribal court. For the native people in the last few years the U. S. Department of Justice has been somewhat supportive in allowing tribes to look at their own form of indigenous justice and put those concepts back together, making them operational within the tribal court system.

Peacemaking at the Little River Band (LRB) of Ottawa Indians works within the tribal court structure. The peacemaking coordinator for the tribe covers a nine-county area reaching from the offices at Manistee down to Kent County. The

peacemaking system at the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians is known as Gda Dwendaagnananik, which means “all our relations.” The peacemaking system population is primarily youth for the first year. These youth will come from referrals at the LRB tribal court, other tribal courts, state and county courts, schools and walk-ins. It is mandated by the Little River Band of Ottawa



Juvenile Code that all first-time status offenders who come before the tribal court and are members of the LRB of Ottawa Indians are automatically referred to peacemaking.

Regional administration

The core peacemakers have broken the service area into three regions to better serve the tribe's 2,600 members. Region 1 includes Manistee, Wexford, Mason, Oceana, Newaygo and Lake counties. Region 2 is Muskegon County, because of its

more than 600 tribal members.

Region 3 includes Kent and Ottawa counties. In each region there are six peacemaker volunteers, three male and three female. The Ottawa people have teachings from our elders that tell us about the importance of balance between male and female, so we have applied that teaching in our peacemaking. We also ask in each region that out of the six volunteers, three be professional service people, although we like to see three peacemakers in each region to be grass roots community people. One elder is asked to serve on this group in each region.

Out of these six peacemakers one volunteer is assigned the position as “lead peacemaker”. That person is responsible to stay in contact with the peacemaking coordinator. The Tribal Court will have knowledge of cases that come by way of the courts or referrals through the coordinator. But cases in other regions that come to the lead peacemaker via schools referrals or walk-ins are the responsibility of the lead peacemaker, who will contact the coordinator and do information gathering. When all information is gathered and dates have been settled for a peacemaking session, the people convene.

Peacemaking customs

The peacemaking session is open to all persons who have a

Peacemaking uses precepts of modern forms of justice, including some used in the “balanced and restorative” juvenile justice system. When a case comes to the peacemakers and involves a wrongdoer and victim, the wrongdoer first has to admit his or her responsibility for their action.

vested interest, especially if the session involves children or youth. There are no judges, lawyers or defense people. In these sessions the people come before their community and family or even before their traditional clan people. The peacemaking session has no time frame when it is in session. The people stop when business is done unless another session is necessary. Because peacemaking is one of the Anishnabek original ways of handling problems all the sessions are started in a traditional way. The room is usually smudged down by one of the peacemakers and a fire may be used, another important mechanism used by Native people. Any person who wants to offer a few words starts the session with a prayer. These things are done just to start with a clear and good heart. Tobacco—another symbolic way of requesting assistance in Indian country—is given to peacemakers as payment for their services for hearing the case.

Parallels to modern formats

Peacemaking uses precepts of modern forms of justice, including

some used in the “balanced and restorative” juvenile justice system. When a case comes to the peacemakers and involves a wrongdoer and victim, the wrongdoer first has to admit his or her responsibility for their action. Peacemaking sessions are not always trying to find guilt but to find some resolve for the problem. We would like to walk away from a peacemaking sessions with a feeling that some healing and closure has happened for both parties involved in the session.

With youth and children it is very important that they learn to find some responsibility and healing for their wrongdoing behavior. When kids are caught in the courts today, because of the dockets or whatever, they are treated like common criminals. I am not sure by putting youth in lockup facilities that we are doing the best thing for them. I am not sure the current system is working too well for kids either. That is what peacemaking is attempting to assist in the native community.

Remember I am not talking about chronic juvenile offenders or families that have been going through

courts for years. Peacemaking puts more responsibility on the family, it allows for the family to interact with one another and receive help. The peacemakers hearing cases involve different service agencies, traditional people, elders, anyone that can help when we have families with problems.

Contract to do good, right

When youth come to the sessions, peacemakers and families usually construct contracts. The contracts have timelines that are reasonable for both parent and the state. Contracts must be completed or the case is referred back to the referring court and regular proceedings take place. If the youth and family complete the task agreed upon by peacemakers and family, the charges are dismissed. Every case is reviewed to see if it is appropriate for the peacemaking.

Gda Dwendaagnananik is not a new concept. Native people from this area have used this means of handling problems for a long time. I think as people we tend to complicate things to a point where we lose track of what we are attempting to succeed at. In working with youth that’s what we need to do, work with them, but work with them to be responsible.

■ If you would like more information on Little River Band of Ottawa Indians Gda Dwendaagnananik—“all our relations”—call the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians Tribal Court peacemaking coordinator at 1-888-723-8288.



Genesee Valley Regional Center

Residential detention and treatment center serves Flint, mid-Michigan
“Balanced and restorative justice” philosophy permeates overall program

By Judith Arthur, Director
Genesee Valley Regional Center
Telephone (810) 733-3820

FLINT—The Genesee Valley Regional Center stands quietly in a northwestern Flint neighborhood where it has served the children of mid-Michigan since the 1920s.

Originally established as a county-operated orphanage, the state of Michigan assumed responsibility for the center in 1978. In the following two decades, GVRC has expanded its ongoing program of services for Michigan’s youth.

Housing 104 residents, GVRC is a regional detention and treatment center serving 15 counties. It provides short-term detention and long-term residential treatment services for juvenile felons and youth awaiting a court hearing or placement decision. The center is administered through the FIA Office of Juvenile Justice.

Balanced and restorative justice

The values of “balanced and restorative justice” are reflected in these program areas. This philosophy places value on personal accountability, community safety and individual competency development. It is used under the precept that any youngster who enters the juvenile justice system should leave it better prepared to be a productive member of the community.

Under balanced and restorative philosophy treatment, youngsters are helped to understand the harm their behavior caused, and are helped to find chances to repair that harm. Whether they are involved in competency building or participating in community services, GVRC residents are assisted to grow men-



Flint Mayor Woodrow Stanley (center above) and television camera crews watch residents from Genesee Valley Regional Center clean up a graffiti-stained building. The kids worked for about four hours cleaning the front and back of the building.



tally and socially while fulfilling the requirements of their placement at the center.

Genesee Valley Regional Center has a victims advisory group that meets monthly. The group includes representatives from the Flint City Council, Flint Police Department, YWCA of Greater Flint/SAFE House domestic violence shelter, WJRT-TV 12, an attorney, public school students, the Victims Advocacy Program and teen court facilitators. Members of the group identify and organize community service programs for residents that

specifically address the needs of crime victims in the community.

Graffiti clean-up

Genesee Valley Regional Center held a kickoff for its ongoing graffiti clean-up project on Oct. 18, 1999. This project was recommended by the victims advisory group, many of whom noted that numerous small business owners in Flint were victimized by graffiti markings. In an ironic twist, the police department—in an effort to control gang activity—began to issue citations to business owners requiring them to clean or cover up the graffiti or pay a \$500 fine.

The GVRC proposal was for police to advise the center of businesses that received citations, then Genesee Valley Regional Center would contact the business owners, offering a work force to clean up. Merchants were requested to supply materials and a group of residents would come to the site to clean up graffiti markings.

There was a flurry of media activity in the week preceding the Oct. 18 kickoff. Genesee Valley Regional Center held a press conference on the project that aired on Channel 12 and several other broadcast outlets. On the day of the first cleanup, a crew of GVRC residents went to a local grocery store to paint over an accumulation of gang markings and obscenities. Channel 12 did an onsite broadcast at 6:30 a. m. to record the “before” event, then returned to the store in the afternoon for “after” video.

Flint Mayor Woodrow Stanley came to the site to offer encouragement and compliments to the youth on their efforts. Members of the Flint police stopped by to lend their support. In just a few hours the outside of the grocery store had a fresh coat of paint and the whole neighborhood looked better for it.

Community service

Community service is a built-in component of Genesee Valley Regional Center’s treatment program. Residents are required to complete 30 hours of community services before they can be recommended for release. Historically, youth have been involved in a variety

of projects. These have included:

- Operation Brush Up, an annual neighborhood housing clean up and painting activity.
- Habitat for Humanity, where hundreds of hours of “sweat equity” are donated to deserving families.
- The Salem Housing Project, an endeavor directed at restoring old homes for new owners.
- The Flint River cleanup project.
- Community park cleanup and restoration.
- Painting at the YWCA of Greater Flint/SAFE House shelter.
- Serving at a soup kitchen.

On the day of the first cleanup, Channel 12 did an onsite broadcast at 6:30 a. m. to record the “before” event, then returned to the store in the afternoon for “after” video.

- Visiting convalescent homes.
- Giving holiday food baskets to needy families.

Genesee Valley Regional Center residents have responded in very human ways to the opportunity to give to others and repair damage done to communities and their residents.

They have acknowledged that they did not previously think about the victims of their crimes or the needs of others. With the chance to meet and know people who have been harmed, these young offenders have become sensitized and caring toward others. They admit to feeling differently—seeing people as valued

individuals rather than potential targets.

The future at GVRC

Among Genesee Valley Regional Center’s future plans are “teen jury” activities. This will provide participants with an opportunity to work with other teens and learn how justice works. It will allow them to help other teens realize and deal with the consequences of their actions.

The center is also planning development of victim panels that will meet and talk with youngsters about the harm caused by different types of

offenses. This will help offenders understand how crime affects victims and what each victim needs to restore the losses they suffered.

The ideals of balanced and restorative justice have provided the framework for Genesee Valley Regional Center’s residents to affect positive change in their lives and the community. Both the residents of the center and the community profit from these efforts and plans continue to take form for an ongoing effort toward mutual appreciation.



Redford Project Zero site reached “zero” in January

Western Wayne County district was 34th to reach the goal

REDFORD TOWNSHIP—The Wayne County Redford district Project Zero program reached “zero” — a point in time when all target Family Independence Program cases expected to work and have income were doing so — on Jan. 19. Gov. John Engler made the announcement Jan. 28.

The Western Wayne County program is the 34th site to reach zero since September 1997. It is one of 70 sites participating in 49 Project Zero counties, including all Family Independence Program districts in Wayne, Oakland and Genesee counties.

“Project Zero has become the watchword for success in welfare reform,” said Engler. “For four years Project Zero sites have proved it works everywhere — from inner cities to rural counties in the U. P. and southern Michigan to populous suburban areas.”

Project Zero is Michigan’s welfare reform initiative with a goal for all target Family Independence Program cases (FIP, formerly AFDC) to work and have earned income. Project Zero measures “target” cases, or those expected to participate in Work First, find work and earn income.

The Redford district joined Project Zero in October 1999 when the project was expanded from 24 to 49 counties. At that time Redford had 947 FIP cases, of which 341 were included in the Project Zero target group. Of those, 100 did not have income. At the end of December 1999, Redford had only 214 target cases and 22 without income. That is the group that was reduced to “zero” on Jan. 19.

“I am very pleased to report this achievement in Wayne County,”

said Family Independence Agency director Douglas E. Howard.

“Thanks to the efforts of Redford district manager Phil Kwierant, his staff and partners, we take pride in the eighth Wayne County district at ‘zero.’

“Wayne County FIA director Jerome Rutland and Project Zero partners can take pride in this ongoing triumph in southeast Michigan.”

The Redford district includes Garden City, Dearborn Heights, Westland, Livonia, Plymouth, Redford and part of Detroit. It is a suburban-urban, mixed economic, multicultural district.



Phil Kwierant

“When we joined Project Zero last October, we were already using Project Zero technology,” said Kwierant (pronounced current). “Our goal was to reach zero by March.”

He said the district reached the goal earlier thanks to efforts of Redford staff and their Work First partners — The Resource Network in Redford, ACCESS in Dearborn (an Arab-American service provider) and Employment Training Development Inc. — often called ETDI — from Wayne.

“I am happy to see how fast we moved and the commitment from our Michigan Works! Agency,” said Kwierant. “It is indicative of the good work that typically goes on in this district.”

Kwierant, who has been Redford district manager since 1988, said the district did not put new

contracts into service for Project Zero.

“There is strong community support in this neighborhood and we have solid informal relationships with local agencies. We are well-established in the district,” he said.

But there was another motivating factor for Redford staff. “I am retiring Feb. 1, and that seemed to give our staff some extra motivation,” said Kwierant.

Robert Wylie, a section manager in the Redford district office who oversees the Project Zero program, agreed.

“Our initial target date was March,” he said. “But when we hired our Project Zero coordinator Carla Bland-Jones in November and found out about Phil’s retirement, that gave us extra incentive.”

Wylie said job fairs helped unemployed target customers find local jobs with employers with entry-level jobs.

“We held job fairs and scheduled all target case customers to attend,” said Wylie. “The Resource Network lined up employers and we got our customers there. Many people ended up with new jobs, and we ended up closing a lot of cases.”

Wylie said district customers tend to be homeowners with strong support networks, making issues such as transportation and child care less critical than in low-income areas or those with less well-developed community support systems.

“We have a stable staff, and most of our family independence specialists are experienced workers,” he said. “Reaching zero was a task, but one we knew was achievable.”

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As century closed welfare cases plummeted

Simultaneously, Project Zero sites continued to excel

As 1999 came to a close, Michigan's cash assistance welfare caseload continued to decline and Project Zero, the state's welfare reform program, continued to improve.

In December 1999, the Family Independence Program (FIP—formerly AFDC) average daily caseload was the lowest number since May 1970. In December, the average daily caseload was 76,113. Of those, about 37,000 were child only or deferred cases. Gov. John Engler made the announcement Jan. 20.

"The new century dawned with more former public assistance recipients in the work force," said Engler. "Our goal is to ensure that everyone who can work is working and participating in the vibrant Michigan economy."

The FIP caseload has declined by 66.4 percent since March 1994, when it totaled 226,863 cases, the highest number in recent years. The all-time caseload peak was in March 1981, when there were 248,377 cases.

Engler said Michigan's 49 Project Zero counties continue to rapidly reduce cash assistance cases and move people into the work force using neighborhood collaboration and innovative techniques. Project Zero counties reduced target cases by 8 percent from November to December, besting the state reduction of 4.3 percent.

The reduction was even greater for target cases with income—the cases that get the most intensive services—reduced by 6.6 percent from November to December. Statewide, the reduction was 3.4 percent. Meanwhile, two more Wayne County sites reached zero in December and another in January.

"What has happened in Project Zero sites shows any district can reach zero if they have the resolve," said Engler. "Zero" is a point in time when all target FIP cases are earning some income. Target cases are those of 60 or more days' duration that are required to attend Work First and are expected to work and have earnings.

In December the 49 Project Zero counties managed 78 percent of all target FIP cases in Michigan. Thirty-four of 70 Project Zero sites have reached "zero" since September 1997 and several other large metropolitan districts had low caseloads at the end of December. On Dec. 31, 1999 Kent County FIA had 65 cases without income and the Redford district had 22 target cases without income (Redford hit zero on Jan. 19).

Success in Project Zero counties has been the result of efforts between state and local partners, all aimed at employment for local welfare customers. "With continued collaboration and support from our partners in the local communities, we will continue to bust barriers to employment for our customers," said FIA director Howard.

Howard said FIA-provided work supports for current and former FIP recipients help them become self-sufficient. Some of those supports include day care, food stamps and medical assistance.

December 1999 data showed 70,176 families qualified for day care assistance from the FIA, representing 130,333 children. Of those families, 20,592 were then or formerly receiving FIP. During December, 52,180 food stamp households were working and received cash instead of food stamps.

"Working with other partners in state government and in communities, we are dedicated to help all Michigan citizens reach their goals of self-sufficiency and independence from public assistance," said Howard.

Redford site reached "zero" in January

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Kwierant said Project Zero has been a success. "There have always been employment programs and we have supported all of them," he said. "This one had more teeth to it and gave our staff stronger encouragement."

Started in 1996, Project Zero is a cooperative effort of the Family Independence Agency, Michigan Department of Career Development *Michigan Works!* and Work First

entities, Michigan departments of Transportation and Community Health, and local service providers. It is designed to break down barriers to employment for public assistance customers and support them in the work force.

Other Project Zero sites to reach zero one or more time since September 1998 include: Alger, Alpena, Barry, Benzie, Berrien, Charlevoix,

Eaton, Emmet, Gladwin, Grand Traverse, Hillsdale, Kalkaska, Kent, Lake, Leelanau, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Menominee, Midland, Montmorency, Newaygo, Oceana, Ottawa, Presque Isle and Wexford-Missaukee counties and the Wayne County FIA Forest-Ellery, Fort Wayne, Lincoln Park, Romulus, Taylor, Tireman and Warren-Conner district offices.

A perspective on foster care in Michigan

Foster care mentoring on the way with FIA assistance But still no simple answer for recruiting more foster parents

By Myrna McNitt, M. S. W.

Michigan Foster and Adoptive Parent Association

Telephone (616) 396-2610

■ Myrna McNitt provided this testimony in a public hearing before Michigan legislators in October 1999. It is used here with permission.

As a participant and observer of child welfare for nearly 30 years and as an advisor to the Michigan Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (MFAPA) for over 27 years, I would like to share some thoughts concerning the “crisis” of having sufficient foster parents to meet the needs of Michigan’s abused and neglected children.

The crisis that Michigan is facing is not unique to child welfare. Problems in recruitment have been articulated at state, national, and international conferences that I have attended in the past year. Thus, recruitment of foster parents is in fact a global crisis. This crisis is linked with economic conditions that have women entering the work force in new and staggering numbers, an alarming number of single parent households, and many middle income families deferring child rearing until they are set in their careers. These economic conditions do not bode well for the care of our children. There are clear issues that have funding, policy, and legislative implications for not only foster care recruitment but also for child day care. As leaders, we must constantly ask who is minding the baby and what is the quality of care that the child is receiving.

I am pleased to inform you that for the past two years MFAPA and the Family Independence Agency have had a rich and rewarding dialogue concerning the needs of

foster parents. This resulted in implementation of new foster parent mentoring programs that will be fully implemented in the 12 counties having the highest rate of out-of-home care. Full implementation will be completed for those counties in the next 18 months. It is our joint contention that



supporting foster parents through the first six months of their journey into child welfare will assist in their retention as foster parents.

The second strategy that has been funded statewide is development of the “parent to parent” support group. One of the reasons leading to adverse licensing and/or families giving up their license to foster is the isolation that foster parents experience. Foster-adoptive parent support groups give families a group of reference that allows for resource development, peer support, and advocacy at the local level.

The third area is training. The FIA has worked closely with MFAPA to put in place a comprehensive plan to train foster parents from the time of inquiry through post licensing training. Techniques to manage child development once a

child is in foster care have been identified by foster parents leaving the system as a need. Our current training plan should begin to address this problem.

MFAPA is conducting an open-closed home survey to better understand what foster parents want and need from the system. This data will be shared with all of the stakeholders as it is processed.

Finally, the FIA has established a Task Force on Early Infant Brain Development. Research says who rocks, and how they rock, the baby’s cradle has a direct relationship on whether that child will grow up exhibiting violent behavior. This task force is developing a curriculum-training package for child welfare workers and for foster-adoptive parents to begin to break the cycle of violence. Credit for much of aforementioned should be given to central office FIA staff.

That is the good news. There are still many areas that need attention that will make foster care a more attractive option for community persons interested in the well-being of our abused and neglected children. One of the issues that persons interested in foster care often ask about is related to liability. A common question is, “What if I have a problem, who will protect me?” Foster parents in Michigan do not have as much liability protection as does an emergency care technician. It would be possible to draft limited liability legislation and set up a fund such as

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Fiscal year 2000 Work First funding

Additional \$6.4 million will expand support services through Michigan Works! agencies

LANSING—\$6.4 million in additional Work First funding was awarded to Michigan Works! Agencies (MWA) for the 2000 fiscal year, Michigan Department of Career Development said Jan. 28. The agencies provide employment services to job seekers and employers at more than 100 Michigan Works Service Centers.

The funds meet projected cost increases of managing Work First cases and providing supportive services to Work First participants. Supportive services help eliminate barriers to employment by providing work clothes, transportation and other work-related expenses to customers.

Because of changes to the Work First program, participants are now eligible for services for a longer period of time and more families are receiving child day care, food stamps or Medicaid but are not receiving an FIA cash grant. These factors result in increased costs for MWA.

Funding for the Work First program is provided through the federal TANF block grant. The MDCD Office of Workforce Development oversees the Work First program. For more information contact Tiffany Dowling at (517) 241-0592. The box (right) includes a breakdown of MWA funding.

Work First Additional Allocations Fiscal Year (FY) 2000

<i>Michigan Works! Agency</i>	<i>Counties served</i>	<i>Total funding</i>
ACSET	Kent, Allegan	\$225,441
Berrien/Cass/Van Buren	Berrien, Cass, Van Buren	186,097
Calhoun ISD	Barry, Calhoun, Branch	120,366
CAPC	Isabella, Montcalm, Gratiot, Ionia	89,335
City of Detroit	Detroit	2,003,343
Eastern U.P.	Luce, Mackinac, Chippewa	30,177
Kalamazoo/St. Joseph	Kalamazoo, St. Joseph	152,758
Career Alliance	Shiawassee, Genesee	462,177
The Job Force	Marquette, Dickinson, Menominee, Alger, Delta, Schoolcraft	77,807
Lansing Tri-County	Clinton, Eaton, Ingham	224,468
Livingston County	Livingston	157,851
Macomb/St. Clair	St. Clair, Macomb	241,044
Muskegon County	Oceana, Muskegon	155,975
Northeast	Cheboygan, Presque Isle	126,927
Northwest	Otsego, Alpena, Montmorency, Crawford, Oscoda, Alcona, Emmet, Charlevoix, Antrim, Leelanau, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Benzie, Manistee, Missaukee	467,652
Oakland County	Oakland	299,418
Ottawa County	Ottawa	22,407
Region 7B	Roscommon, Ogemaw, Iosco, Clare, Gladwin, Arenac	100,097
Saginaw/Midland/Bay	Midland, Bay, Saginaw	307,529
South Central	Jackson, Hillsdale, Lenawee	123,449
SEMCA	Monroe, Wayne	586,585
Thumb Area	Huron, Tuscola, Sanilac, Lapeer	66,037
Washtenaw County	Washtenaw	78,250
West Central	Mason, Lake, Osceola, Mecosta, Newaygo	87,217
Western U.P.	Ontonagon, Gogebic, Houghton, Keweenaw, Baraga, Iron	47,593

Foster care

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the state has done for uninsured drivers. Another solution may be found in providing liability insurance for foster parents. Some states have funded foster parent liability insurance through Title IV-E funds. Either solution would be an incentive to individuals thinking of foster care and would be a retention tool. MFAPA would support and assist in finding a

solution to this problem.

In the past six months—as I have traveled the state training new foster home mentors—I have learned that the length of time from inquiry to licensing may take at a bare minimum five months and may take up to 12 months. Once the home study is completed, the assignment of the provider number may take up to two

months. Thus, a home could be licensed but without the provider number, they could not be paid. If we are to assure a sufficient pool of adequately prepared foster parents to meet the needs of the abused and neglected children we must bring new resources into the system in a more timely fashion.

Fight child abuse by state tax checkoff

Children's Trust Fund checkoff appears on the Michigan Income Tax form

Taxpayers can mark the CTF checkoff or designate the size of a deductible contribution

1999 checkoff contributions totaled \$859,000, up \$53,000 from 1998

Almost 70,500 taxpayers participated

LANSING—Anyone who wants to fight child abuse and neglect and get a tax deduction can achieve those goals on their Michigan Income Tax form.

The Children's Trust Fund, an entity administered through the Family Independence Agency, provides funds to local child abuse and neglect councils in Michigan and funds prevention programs in communities. The CTF receives funding through donations, many from the checkoff on the state income tax form.

"Michigan taxpayers can help prevent child abuse and neglect next year by using the income tax form checkoff to make a donation from their tax refunds," said FIA director Douglas E. Howard. "By doing so, they can actively support our efforts to keep our children healthy, happy and safe."

On Feb. 15, Secretary of State Candice Miller encouraged Michigan taxpayers to contribute to the Children's Trust Fund when they prepare their Michigan income tax.

"No child should live in fear of abuse and preventing abuse is what the campaign is all about," said Miller. "Michigan residents have

always given generously."

The CTF, an independent unit of state government, receives no state appropriation. It is funded through donations from the state

butions totaled more than \$859,000, up by about \$53,000 from 1998. More than 70,496 taxpayers participated in the campaign last year, representing a 14 percent increase from 1998.

The CTF checkoff appears on the Michigan Income Tax form. Taxpayers may either mark the CTF checkoff, which contributes \$10 to the Trust Fund, or designate the size of their contribution. The donation can be deducted on the following year's tax form.

The Children's Trust Fund, an independent unit of government,

provides economic support to 69 local child abuse and neglect councils across Michigan. Dollars donated to CTF through the checkoff are also used to provide funding for prevention programs in the donor's community.

Created by the Michigan Legislature in 1982, the CTF provides a permanent funding source for prevention services that have reached more than 2.7 million children and 600,000 families across the state.



Income Tax Form checkoff, interest income, private donations, special fundraising activities and grants.

To encourage citizens to participate in the checkoff campaign, CTF brochures and posters are being placed in all Secretary of State offices through April 15.

"Children are the future," said Children's Trust Fund chairperson Candace Sorenson. "By contributing to CTF, you make an investment in Michigan's future that is guaranteed to pay off."

"We know prevention services make a difference (but) we simply to not have enough resources to meet the level of need identified."

In 1999 tax checkoff contri-



Did you know?

FIA guidelines for preparing client information inserts

Effective Dec. 22, 1999

Client information inserts are notices to program recipients regarding a variety of directives. They may be enclosed with Family Independence Program (FIP), State Disability Assistance (SDA) and Refugee Assistance Program (REF) warrant mailings or when Medicaid identification cards (MA ID) are mailed. Family Independence Agency offices, outside agencies and other state departments may request inserts with warrant mailings or MA ID cards.

Agencies outside the FIA may request an insert be included with an FIA mailing. Outside agencies may print the inserts locally but they must be printed and packaged according to size, weight, and package specifications cited here. In addition, these inserts must be submitted through the local FIA office or, if the mailing is statewide, the request must go through the FIA program office.

Printing specifications

Central office, county and district FIA offices must have inserts printed through FIA Office Services Division. The requesting unit should contact Petra Boyer, the analyst currently handling inserts in FIA Office Services, at (517) 373-0007 to request a "slot" for mailing a client information insert. A slot is the date the insert will accompany an FIA warrant mailing. Slots are available two to eight times each month. They may be "filled" by previously requested inserts, since only a limited number of inserts can accompany a mailing. At the time of request you will be required to disclose all known information including the:

- Requester name.
- Telephone number.
- Form name.
- Form number.
- Quantity.
- Disposition (discard, warehouse, return).
- Address.
- Distribution (all counties, county-specific, district-specific or zip code for FIP, MA ID, SDA).
- Mailing schedule (1st or 2nd half of the specific month.)

If FIA Office Services is printing the insert, they will after approval send an electronic file for posting on the FIA-Net. If the insert is not approved, it will be returned to the requester for changes. If an insert does not get mailed to FIA customers due to unforeseen circumstances, Office Services will notify the requester. Inserts may be one or two sided, in colored ink, or on more costly colored paper. When inserts are printed by an outside printer, including inserts for the Medical Services Administration, a camera-ready or electronic copy must be provided for posting.

Inserts can be preprinted in one of two styles:

FLATS on 60 lb. Offset paper

Regular payroll 8 x 3 ½ inches
MAID Cards 8 x 3 ½

TRIFOLD on 24 lb. Bond paper

Regular trifold 8 x 10 ½ inches
letter folded to 8 x 3 ½ – no lip

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If inserts are shipped to the DMB Warehouse they must be shrink-wrapped 500 per package of 8 x 3 ½ or 200 per package of 8 x 10 ½. Rubber or paper banding will not be accepted. Cartons used to ship and store inserts must be labeled with the insert number and revision date (or description) and quantity. DMB Mailing Services will not process inserts not meeting these specifications and those of poor quality.

Child support enforcement breaks record in '99

More federal income tax refunds seized

Program to identify financial accounts shows early success

WASHINGTON, D. C. — Federal and state child support enforcement programs broke new records in nationwide collections in fiscal year 1999, reaching \$15.5 billion, nearly doubling the amount collected in 1992.

The federal government collected a new record amount of \$1.3 billion in overdue child support from federal income tax refunds for tax year 1998, an 18 percent increase over the previous year and a 99 percent increase since 1992. Nearly 1.4 million families benefited from these collections. In addition, a new program to match delinquent parents with financial records found 662,000 accounts since August 1999 with a value of about \$1 billion. U. S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala made the announcement Jan. 27.

"We are working harder than ever to ensure children get the support from both parents they deserve and need," said Shalala. "We make no apologies for using tough measures, but we also are striving to help those parents who can't meet their responsibilities find the means to do so. Every child deserves the financial and emotional support of both parents."

Shalala said the federal criminal child support enforcement initiative called "Project Save Our Children" is succeeding in its pursuit of chronic delinquent parents who owe large sums of child support.

Multi-agency regional task forces have investigated 800 cases resulting in 275 arrests, 210 convictions and the payment of \$5.3 million in owed child support to date. These teams include representatives from

FIA hosting August conference

"Motown revue" performers sought

The Michigan Family Independence Agency is hosting the Big Ten Food Stamp Midwest Regional Food and Nutrition Services Conference Aug. 16-18, 2000 at the Hyatt Regency in Dearborn. The conference will focus on the impact of technology, training and teamwork on food stamp payment accuracy.

As part of the planning committee, Wayne County is issuing a statewide casting call for all FIA employees who wish to be considered as part of the "Motown revue" evening entertainment on Aug. 17. Auditions will be held in late April at a designated location in Detroit and Lansing.

Those interested in auditioning for the "Motown revue" should contact Liz Robinson at (313) 256-1755 or Val Gordon at (313) 256-1864.

the HHS Office of Inspector General and Office of Child Support Enforcement and from the Department of Justice, state child support agencies and local law enforcement organizations.

In Michigan, the Child Support Multi-Agency Investigative Team has performed similar duties. Through January 1999 the team resulted in 171 arrests, 155 convictions and more than \$3 million in restitution orders.

Other Michigan efforts to collect delinquent child support include Work First programs for noncustodial parents owing child support, state laws suspending driver's, professional and occupational licenses for child support scofflaws, and working with hospitals to establish and acknowledge paternity.

"Because of the increased scrutiny and cooperation of the federal, state and local agencies responsible for child support enforcement, it has become much more

difficult for non-custodial parents to ignore their financial obligations to their children," said HHS Inspector General June Gibbs Brown. "As a result of the successes of these multi-agency teams in identifying and catching those seriously delinquent in their payments, more children than ever before are getting the help they need."

Under the federal tax offset program, state child support agencies report names of parents who owe child support payments and the overdue amount to the HHS Administration for Children and Families. These individuals are first notified by the state in a pre-offset letter of their overdue child support obligation.

This gives them the opportunity to have their case reviewed for correctness before final submission to the U.S. Treasury Department for action. These individuals are then notified in writing by the U.S. Department of Treasury, Financial Management Services of the amount to be withheld to cover their child support

debt. That amount is then deducted from their income tax refund. The delinquency may also be reported to credit reporting agencies.

HHS reported nearly \$66.9 million in tax offset collections in Michigan in 1999 for 77,323 families.

The 1996 welfare reform law included President Clinton's proposed Financial Institution Data Match Program, which matches records of delinquent parents with financial institutions. The program requires states to identify accounts of delinquent parents and use existing state laws to "freeze and seize" the dollars.

In 1998, Congress made it easier for multi-state institutions to match records by using the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement. Over the past year, with the cooperation of the financial industry and their associations, HHS negotiated agreements with more than 2,300 financial institutions. When successful matches are made, the information is sent to the states within 48 hours for placement of a lien on and seizure of all or part of the accounts identified.

The 1996 law also established grants to states and territories to support and facilitate non-custodial parents' access and visitation with their children. In 1997, HHS awarded \$10 million in grants to all states and territories. Based upon preliminary information from 28 states and 2 territories, the program served almost 20,000 individuals with the most individuals receiving parenting education, assistance in the development of parenting plans, and mediation services.

"The 1996 welfare reform law gave the child support enforcement program the toughest measures

ever enacted. Our new enforcement tools are beginning to deliver on their promise," said Olivia A. Golden, HHS assistant secretary for children and families. "As we succeed in finding every available dollar from parents to support their children financially, we are also striving to help children grow healthy and strong with the emotional support of both parents."

Noncustodial parents whose children receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and whose unpaid child support totals

non-TANF families was \$952, and the average collection for TANF families was \$923. Collections for tax year 1998 were made after tax returns for that year were filed in 1999 and refunds requested.

Since taking office, the Clinton Administration made child support enforcement a critical priority. The National Directory of New Hires, which matches child support orders to employment records, found more than 2.8 million delinquent parents in its two years of

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\$150 or more may have their federal income tax refunds withheld. For tax year 1998, refunds were withheld on behalf of more than 919,000 families with children receiving TANF. Parents of children who do not receive TANF must owe at least \$500 to have their refunds withheld. More than 492,500 non-TANF families benefited from the program in fiscal year 1999.

For tax year 1998, the total amount collected via tax refund was \$1.3 billion, up from \$661 million in tax year 1992. For tax year 1998, the overall average collection per family was \$933. The average collection for

operation. Paternity establishment rose to 1.45 million in 1998, a more than three-fold increase from 516,000 in 1992. The Passport Denial Program has collected more than \$2.25 million in lump sum child support payments and is currently denying 30 to 40 passports to delinquent parents per day.

A state by state list of the tax-offset collections and families served is available at: <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news> For other HHS press releases and fact sheets pertaining to the subject of this announcement, please visit: <http://www.os.dhhs.gov/news/press/>

FIA fiscal year 2001 budget proposed

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opportunities, job club and job search support. In addition, on-site child care and tutoring services will be provided to the children to provide them with safe, productive and educational summer opportunities. Funding of \$20 million is provided for this initiative.

■ **Housing assistance.** In order to obtain and maintain employment, it is essential that families have access to quality, affordable housing. Utilizing available TANF funds, the budget recommends additional funding to increase home-ownership among low-income families. A \$25 million Michigan Affordable Housing Fund, administered by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, will support lease-to-purchase programs, Habitat for Humanity, support for housing developers and other innovative home ownership programs.

■ **Individual Development Accounts or IDAs.** The Family Opportunity Project also includes funding for the state to provide match funds to help low-income families save for a downpayment on a home through their IDA. Individual Development Accounts are savings accounts whereby low-income families can save for major life purchases (i.e., home ownership or higher education) without the savings affecting their eligibility for financial assistance. Currently, the Family Independence Agency provides limited funding for non-profit organizations that want to establish an IDA program. The Governor recommends \$5 million to expand this program to encourage family savings and home-ownership.

The new budget includes services to children and families that strengthen families and protect children including:

■ **Teen pregnancy reduction efforts.** Michigan recently received federal bonus funding of \$20 million because of our success in reducing out-of-wedlock births. The governor proposes that the bonus funding be used to increase and replicate those teen pregnancy services with a proven track record of success, focusing on male and female high school and middle school students in communities with high teen pregnancy rates. In addition, a portion of the funding will be used to strengthen paternity identification rates so that every child

need to be removed from their parents' home, the budget recommends investing an additional \$1 million in efforts to recruit, train and retain high quality foster families and increasing payment rates for foster and adoptive parents by 3 percent.

■ **Domestic violence services.** Child abuse and domestic violence are often linked. The fiscal year 2001 budget recommends a \$650,000 increase in domestic violence funding. To help break the cycle of abuse, a portion of this funding will be directed toward specialized services for children who witness violence in their home. In addition, \$767,000 is added to the Attorney General budget for legal representation and prosecution

Medicaid increases: Public Act 114 of 1999 appropriated over \$85 million in fiscal year 2001 to fund a 4 percent rate increase for hospitals, physicians, and health plans.

born in Michigan has support from both his mother and father.

■ **Child abuse and neglect services.** Unfortunately, despite significant investment of state resources in child abuse and neglect services in the past, child abuse remains a problem. To address this problem, the governor proposes an investment \$13.1 million to immediately bring the Children's Trust Fund to its statutory goal of \$20 million. This one-time supplemental will increase annual spending to further support efforts to fight child abuse and neglect.

■ **Foster care.** To secure the best possible care for those children who

of child welfare cases in Wayne County.

■ **Cost-of-living adjustments in important programs.** Adults in some families who are unable to work are receiving cash assistance from the state. A three percent cost-of-living adjustment is recommended for FIP families whose adult caretaker is exempt from work requirements due to disability. In addition, this budget recommends an increase of over 20 percent for certain "ineligible grantee" FIP cases providing care for children from their extended family.

■ **Services for elderly persons and persons with disabilities.** As with

children and families, the budget recommends a number of initiatives to address the needs of our elderly and disabled citizens. The governor recommends an increase from \$72 million to \$126 million in funding for the MIChoice program. The MIChoice waiver program allows Michigan's low-income elderly and disabled persons to receive nursing home-type services in their own home or other residential setting. This popular program, begun in 1992, now serves 9,000 adults and will expand to 15,000 with this funding increase. In addition, the budget provides \$158.8 million for the Adult Home Help program, which finances in-home assistance for individuals with disabilities.

■ **Prescription coverage.** Michigan currently provides a limited pharmaceutical tax credit and also operates an emergency assistance program for our state's senior citizens. Pharmaceutical costs, however, still impose a substantial financial burden on many seniors. To address the limitations in the existing programs and provide a more extensive benefit package, the governor recommends that the Elder Prescription Insurance Coverage (EPIC) program be implemented on January 1, 2001. This program will provide comprehensive prescription drug benefits for seniors with incomes below 200 percent of poverty. Since the EPIC program provides a much better benefit than the existing programs, we recommend that the tax credit and emergency programs end on December 31, 2000. Starting in fiscal year 2002, the \$20 million spent on the discontinued programs will be combined with \$30 million in Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund

revenues to support the EPIC program. This 150 percent increase in senior pharmaceutical assistance funding will substantially reduce prescription drug costs for Michigan's low-income senior citizens.

Health care and Medicaid

Although the overall rate of growth in health care costs has dramatically slowed due to managed care efforts in the physical health arena, expenditures for mental health and long term care continue to escalate. From fiscal years 1996 to 2000, mental health expenditures have increased 57 percent and long term care expenditures 34 percent. During the same time period, the physical health Medicaid program has slowed growth to 9 percent, an average increase of only 2.3 percent per year.

Medicaid

The percentage of Medicaid costs financed by the state general funds will decrease again in fiscal year 2001 due to changes in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP). In fiscal year 1999, every dollar spent on Medicaid cost the state 47 cents and the Federal government paid the other 53 cents. In fiscal year 2001 the state share will drop to 44 cents.

Rate increases for providers

Public Act 114 of 1999 appropriated over \$85 million in fiscal year 2001 to fund a 4 percent rate increase for hospitals, physicians, and health plans. This discretionary increase exceeds the inflationary increases that would have been required under the expired Boren lawsuit settlements for hospitals. This

budget recommends similar rate increases for other physical health providers.

Qualified health plans

In addition to the 4 percent increase, qualified health plans also benefited from a significant policy change. Effective February 1, 2000, health plans will no longer be required to pay for drugs prescribed by community mental health psychiatrists. This policy change will save health plans over \$30 million, an amount equivalent to an additional 3 percent annual increase. Combined, these increases are more than double the rate of inflation and should be sufficient to support health plan services. However, a competitive bid process, to be conducted in early 2000, will allow the medical care marketplace to determine what payment rates are needed to maintain the quality and integrity of the managed medical care program.

Local programs for uninsured

The executive budget recommendation includes an additional \$10 million in Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund revenue to expand these types of health coverage partnerships with local governments.

The budget proposal now goes to the House and Senate for review and debate. The governor's fiscal year 2001 budget recommendation is available on the Internet at: <http://www.state.mi.us/dmb/budget>



2000 State of the State

Governor says Project Zero goes statewide in 2000 New effort aimed at remaining nondeferred FIP recipients

LANSING—Gov. John Engler delivered his annual State of the State Address to the state Legislature Jan. 20. Here are excerpts from the address:

“One of the lessons the American people had to relearn in recent years is an age-old lesson: people are best helped when they learn to help themselves. Michigan welfare policy in the 1990s succeeded brilliantly. What we did was compassionate and right. We understood a simple truth: that the best welfare policy in the world is a job.

“Thousands of people have been helped. Their lives have been changed for the better. One key has

been the success of Project Zero. In the coming year, we will extend Project Zero statewide.

“Our policies mean a generation has had its hope restored. Contrast this with the 1970s and 1980s when welfare policy discouraged work. Back then Michigan averaged more than 600,000 individuals on welfare. Remarkably, today there are only 36,000 families that remain on welfare that have no income from a job.

“I propose a mandatory, intensive, one-time campaign, starting this summer, to reach these families. Having come so far, we recognize that those still out of the workforce

present some of the most daunting challenges yet. To assist us, and to help these families help themselves, we will draw upon the experience of some very capable partners – educators, faith-based groups, Michigan Works! Agencies, and other public and private groups.

“Our unprecedented effort will involve the entire family. We will go the extra mile, including child-care and summer school for all kids. Our objective is to remove all barriers to work. It’s time these families go to work!

“In the year ahead, let us ensure Michigan remains the leader in this new century.”

Family Independence Agency
Office of Communications
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